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"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Romans 1:16.

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WHEN UNBELIEF BECOMES PROVERBIAL—WHAT NEXT?

By the Pastor, Dr. T. T. Shields

A Sunday Morning Sermon Preached in Jarvis Street Church, Toronto.

(Stenographically Reported)

"And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

"Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?"

"Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord God; I will make this proverb to cease and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision.

"For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel.

"For I am the Lord: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord God."—Ezekiel 12:21-25.

There is a very interesting chapter of history behind this striking text; and when this sermon is printed I want you to study it again and especially to read the last two chapters of II. Chronicles, and the last three chapters of II. Kings, and in Jeremiah's prophecy from the twenty-eighth chapter to the fortieth chapter. With that historical setting clearly in your mind you will be able, I think, to find for yourselves important spiritual lessons in the passage which I have selected as a text.

God's chosen people of the ancient time occupied a position in the divine purpose analogous to that of the church of the New Testament dispensation. They were a people separated unto God; and their national place of worship was a place which He had chosen to set His name there: "Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." But this separated people had gradually departed from the ways of the Lord. The text has special reference to the kingdom of Judah, which had wandered from Him; and because of their religious declension their political condition waxed worse and worse until they were threatened with multiplying calamities; but instead of turning to the Lord, instead of repenting, and seeking His face and favour, they formed numerous political alliances and resorted to every conceivable political expedient in order to avert the troubles which were rapidly coming upon them. But the one thing that would have saved them, that would have restored their political influence and given them a divinely appointed place among the

nations, was the one thing they refused to do: they refused to hear the word of the Lord, and to obey His voice at the mouth of His prophets. They had become perverted; they laughed at the word of the Lord; they said, "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth. It is useless to believe what the prophets say, to depend upon a divine revelation. Look after yourselves. Work out your own salvation."

In such a time this word of the Lord came to Ezekiel the prophet. And the times to which this text refers were closely analogous to the spiritual condition of the Church of Christ to-day. Beyond all question we are living in a day of appalling apostasy, when from thousands of pulpits a word is being spoken that would equal in its antagonism toward the Word of the Lord the worst utterances of Robert Ingersoll, and Voltaire, and Tom Paine. The devil does not need men of that sort to-day, for the land is full of men who are doing their business, but who are called Doctors of Divinity, and Professors of Theology, and Ministers of the Gospel. The professing church, meanwhile, like Judah of old, is resorting to all sorts of expedients in order to recover its failing spiritual strength.

I.

Here then is the case described in this text, that WHEN UNBELIEF PREVAILS THE ALLEGED UNTRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE WORD OF GOD BECOMES PROVERBIAL,

It was upon everybody's lips in Judah—the priests and those who followed them, the king upon his throne, the princes who attended his court, and the humblest servants in the land, they all said the same thing: "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth." Which, being interpreted, meant, "You are hopelessly behind the time if you are foolish enough to suppose that God is speaking by the mouth of Jeremiah, or by any other prophet." It had become proverbial in Judah that the word of the Lord was not to be believed, was not to be relied upon. Look at the particular period to which our text refers. It found its fulfilment in the days of Zedekiah, the last of Judah's kings before the Babylonian captivity; and the outstanding characteristic of that period was that they mocked the word of the Lord. It mattered not what prophet He sent to them, "rising up betimes and sending", multiplying His messengers because He loved the people; calling them to repentance, threatening them with judgment, telling them that the king of Babylon would certainly come and carry them away captive into another land; declaring to them that because of their sin, God would have no pity, even on His own house, but that He would permit the stranger and the alien to come, and to carry away its precious vessels and all its furniture of gold and burn the glorious house itself with fire, as an evidence of the departure of His favour. Although in plain and unmistakable language prophet after prophet warned the people that thus it should be, they turned a deaf ear to it, and refused to hear one word from God. They said, "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth—we have heard that before, and we do not believe a word of it."

During one period in which God came to Jeremiah he was shut up, and he could not go into the house of the Lord. Therefore he sent for Baruch the scribe, in obedience to the Lord's command, and the Lord spoke His words into the ear and into the heart of Jeremiah, and Jeremiah dictated the words—not the word—that he had heard from the mouth of Jehovah to Baruch the scribe. If you want to know what inspiration is, read the thirty-sixth chapter of Jeremiah. "This word came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Judah . . . and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah the words of the Lord, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book." He actually dictated the words to Jeremiah, and Jeremiah repeated God's words to Baruch, and Baruch wrote down, word for word, as the prophet got it from the mouth of the Lord. "And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I am shut up; I cannot go into the house of the Lord; therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the Lord in the ears of the people in the Lord's house." He took the roll, and he read it to the people, and it was reported to the princes, and they sent for Baruch and they asked him to read it over again. He read the roll again in the ears of the princes, and they said, "We will surely tell the king of all these words."

So they went and told Jehoiakim for he was then king—it was a short time before the days of Zedekiah; but the same general conditions obtained—and the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll out of the scribe's chamber and commanded him to read the roll in his presence: "Now the king sat in the winter-house in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had

read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth." Three of the princes filled with alarm at the king's defiance of God "made intercession that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them"; and he burned the roll in the fire. Then God called Jeremiah again. Remember, if you were to burn every Bible in the fire to-night, there is not one syllable of all that is in that Book that is not in the mind of God: "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." The scriptures were not preserved in monasteries, or other earthly repositories; the text of them was, but the word of the Lord is settled in heaven! He sent for Jeremiah and said, "Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll;" and he wrote it again and the scripture was preserved; for it was "the word of the Lord that liveth and abideth for ever."

What Jehoiakim did people are doing to-day, especially when they have read three or four leaves. If some people had the sense to read the whole roll they would not burn it. But somebody has read three or four leaves and he thinks he knows it all. Do not be afraid of the critics, my friend. I was once. I really thought they must have found a secret door somewhere, that they surely had learned something that some of the rest of us were ignorant of. The more I know of it the more persuaded I am that the prevailing attitude toward the Word of God is the result, not of a truer scholarship, but of a denser spiritual darkness, that it is because "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not."

Thus it came to pass that in that day the prophets of the Lord were subjected to the greatest indignity. Poor Jeremiah! I have heard some preachers say, "I am not a Jeremiah." I should count it the greatest honour that God could confer upon any man to make him a Jeremiah. What was Jeremiah? He was simply a prophet who heard the word of the Lord, and had the daring to tell the people exactly what God had said. That is all. Jeremiah did not bring the judgments. He exerted himself to the utmost to avert them; but he did say, "As God is true, if you do not turn from your sins and bow before God and obey His voice, judgment will come, and the king of Babylon will come and take you away." Ezekiel prophesied while he was "among the captives by the river of Chebar"; and the judgments predicted by Jeremiah had already begun. And because he had the daring to say it he was arrested, he was put in prison, he was cast into the dungeon, he was despised and rejected, and scorned and derided, and his name cast out. But I read to you to-day, in the last chapter of the second book of Chronicles, how the king of Babylon came "to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah". Yet it had become proverbial that such judgment would never fall. And it is characteristic of our day also, that any word that speaks of judgment, which calls men to repentance, is made light of: "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth."

II.

Now the question is, WHAT OUGHT OUR ATTITUDE TO BE? In these premises, in these circumstances, what ought the disciple of the Lord Jesus to do in face of this prevailing unbelief that is becoming atmospheric? Men sneer at the Word; and it is no exaggeration to say, that

it is as proverbial in our time, as it was a proverb in Judah, that the one thing to which no one need pay any attention, and which it were folly ever to expect to see fulfilled, is the Word of the Lord.

Well, in the first place, *be sure to be attentive to the Word of the Lord yourself*. In that very day—Ezekiel is speaking—"the word of the Lord came unto me saying." Ah, my brother, it is possible to hear the word of the Lord still; to feel what Bunyan used to call "the goings of God upon our spirits." It is possible to listen to the voice of divine revelation, to the voice of inspiration, to the revelation of God recorded in His Word. I urge upon every one of you this morning, whatever else you do, that you be careful to keep your ear open to the Word of the Lord; no matter what men may say, see that you give heed to the voice of His Word.

And you students, I want you to follow me for a minute, if you will: what else are you to do? Well, as you listen to the Word of the Lord you will find that *the Lord knows all about what is going on*; for when Ezekiel listened the Lord said, "What is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?—What is that that every man is repeating like a parrot to his neighbour? I have heard it on the streets and in the temple, and in the palace. Do the people think I do not know what they are saying? Do they suppose that I do not know that the disregard of My word has become proverbial? What is that proverb that you have down there, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?" Some young man says, "No, sir; I confess I do not give as much time to the study of the Bible as I ought to do, because my professor recommends me to read many books in order that I may keep abreast of the time." Don't you wish that there were some sort of an encyclopaedia which could give you the latest conclusions of all the modern professors so that you could read them all in one book? It would save you a lot of money if you could read the whole story of this apostasy from beginning to end, and know the heart of it, in one book. Would you like to do it?

If so, this is the Book. There is not a thing which any blinded professor has ever written that is not anticipated here. His folly is described, and his end is revealed. And if you want to be abreast of the time, if you would be prepared to meet every possible emergency, to have an answer for every criticism of the Word of the Lord, then read God's Word. You will find that this principle everywhere obtains, for when you have put down the latest book written in opposition to God's Word, and you open your Bible you will find the Bible saying, "Didn't I tell you that before, that men would say that very thing?" I think, indeed, I can tell you where you can find it all in a few verses in the third chapter of Genesis. Yes, God can answer all the sceptical writers of all time in a few words, even as only four words were necessary to dispel the darkness in the beginning. Every solitary thing that Modernism has ever said is anticipated in the first five verses of the third chapter of Genesis: "Yea, hath God said?"—questioning the fact of revelation; "Ye shall not surely die"—denying the truth of revelation; "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"—"And if that is the word of God, I would not have such a God as that," laying its protest against the very throne of God, and attacking the character of God. That is Modernism, all epi-

tomized in that first lie of the devil. I have often said that he told one lie and it was so successful that he has been engaged in making new clothes for it ever since. There has never been a new thing since: it is all epitomized, it is summarized there. And if you but hear the Word of the Lord you will hear Him saying, as each new book is issued, "What is that proverb that ye have in the land?" He knows all about it, long before the book is reviewed in the magazines.

But *how shall we meet it?* What are you young men going to do about it? I wish I could set this out before you in blazing letters: "TELL THEM THEREFORE, THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD." That is how to meet it. "They have said that My Word will not be fulfilled, give them more of it. Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord God." There is nothing like the Word of the Lord to meet modern unbelief. I have a deepening conviction that the Lord knows how to take care of His own Word, and that He is not dependent upon our reasoning, or upon our scholarship. There is a place for the defence of the truth. I was greatly impressed in reading several chapters of Jeremiah, including the thirty-sixth, in the early hours this morning; it thrilled me again and again. Jeremiah seems to have served as a stenographer. As though God said, "Jeremiah, cease from argument. Listen to what I say to you and write it down. I will tell you what to say." That is what God wants us to do. He said the same to Ezekiel: "Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord God." "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock to pieces?" When Almightyness wields that word, "Thus saith the Lord"! I have seen it smash people to pieces. Do not be afraid to quote Scripture. "Oh that old-fashioned, proof-text method, just quoting Scripture! Be superior to that, you must reason men into the truth." Read your New Testament again and see how the divinely-inspired writers used the despised "proof-text method," proving every position by quoting Scripture. The first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is nearly all quotations from the Old Testament. That is what we must do—give men more and more of the Word of the Lord.

III.

AND WHAT THEN WILL GOD DO? Unbelief ridicules the Word: faith is to hear the Word and declare it. And if we do it, what will God do? "I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision."—"They say, Every vision faileth, but I will fulfil every vision. You go and tell them that the day is coming when they will run for shelter. Tell them that the day is coming when I will make that proverb to cease, and no man in Judah shall dare to say that again, in the day when My judgments are abroad."

Thus it was in the case of Zedekiah. If you will read this whole chapter, the twelfth of Ezekiel, at your leisure, you will find that God came to Ezekiel, and said, "Prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight, and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house. Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing: and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they that go forth into captivity. Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out

thereby. In their sight shalt thou bear it upon thy shoulders, and carry it forth in the twilight: thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground: for I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel. . . . And the prince that is among them, shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes . . . I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans"—mark this—"yet he shall not see it, though he shall die there."—"Tell Zedekiah I will bring him to Babylon, but he shall never see the city: he shall die in the city that he has never seen." They put the prophets in prison for saying that; and yet king Nebuchadnezzar came, and he took Zedekiah and slew his sons before his eyes, and he gouged out the eyes of the king of Judah and bound him with fetters of brass and literally took him into his capital city a blind man, and he died in that far-off country.

God always keeps His word. When the people murmured and they asked for flesh and the Lord promised it to them, Moses said, "The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them? And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or, not."—"You challenge me, do you, Moses? I will show you that when I make a promise I can keep it." "And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea," and God kept His word.

"Well," somebody says, "I do not hold any official position, but I would like to do my part in proving that God's Word is true. I wish you would tell me something that I can do. I wish you would tell me how I can have a part in this great battle, just to be God's instrument so that He can through me show that His Word is true." I will give you a simple story. There were three young men in a great city far away from home, captives in a foreign land. They had found favour with the king, "and the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank. . . . But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king." "But," said Daniel, "we are trusting the Lord. We are doing this in obedience to Him. We believe that God can make pulse and water minister to our bodies just as well as the finest meat from the king's table. Just give us ten days on pulse and water and see what the Lord does for us." "So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." The Lord vindicated the trust of His people, and the prince of the eunuchs had nothing more to say.

We have been talking about the necessity of a separated life, of giving ourselves up to the service of the Lord and finding all our joy in Him. But somebody says, "You cannot interest young people that way. You cannot hold the interest of young people by purely religious services. The church must provide some form of entertainment if young people are to be kept in the church." Our answer is this: "We are going to prove God. We are going to feed our souls on pulse and water, and keep true to God." Others may have wine and meat from the world's table; but we will choose simpler fare. And what will happen? I venture to say that our countenances will be fairer at the end of the time than all those who feed at the world's banqueting house. The principle is clear. God says, "You obey My Word, and I will look after the rest. You do what I tell you to do, and I will vindicate your trust."

And there was Peter. He trampled upon all his own prejudices and the prejudices of his Jewish fellow-apostles and disciples when he actually went to the Gentiles and preached the gospel. I fancy as he went—I think we are justified in reading between the lines—I fancy as he went, following those men to Caesarea, he said, "I wonder what James will say about this? I wonder what John will have to say? I expect I shall have a great time meeting the other apostles when they know that I have been preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. I shall have my hands full explaining my course." But he went in obedience to God's call; and as he preached the gospel the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the Word. "But when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him." He told them of his vision, and how he obeyed the Lord, and he said, "The Lord gave them the Holy Ghost as He did unto us. That is my answer; that is the vindication of my course. I did what God told me to do, and He gave the Holy Ghost." He always will. He will make the proverb to cease. He will stop the mouths of the gainsayers.

I remember some years ago when I had been much exercised about these things—not in the sense of ever being tempted to adopt the modern view of the Bible—but I had been much exercised about how to meet it. I was in Chicago and I went to Harry Munro's mission—the Pacific Gardens' Mission. I found the place was full of the presence of God. I sat at the back, and Harry Munro recognized the friend who was with me, and called him up to the platform. I went up with him, and he said, "Praise the Lord! The Lord sent you. You must preach to-night." The place was full of "toughs", and some who had been "toughs", and some who had spent years behind prison bars. After the address, they told of what the grace of God had done, and as I went away from the Mission that night—I do not know how many were converted, but a large number came forward—as I walked away from the Mission that night, I said to my friend, "In the light of that, it seems a waste of time to read some books. Don't you think when you actually come into the presence of God Himself, and the power of the Holy Ghost rests upon His preached Word, every doubt as to the inspiration and authority of the Bible is burned up?" And it is. I believe that in that one respect many defenders of the faith are in danger of failing. Those of us who stand for the defence of the gospel, and who "earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints," are in danger of thinking that we make progress by reading books about it, or by preaching sermons about it, or by arguing about it. I

am coming to the conviction that the one way to defend the Word of God is to live in such relationship to God that He can prove His own Word; and I believe that what we need to-day is more prayer rather than more preaching; and possibly, less time spent at the study-table and more time upon our knees before God, crying mightily to God that He will come down and make the proverb to cease by fulfilling His own Word.

I want to tell you what happened last night. We had a most gracious meeting of prayer; God, the Spirit, was there in wonderful measure, and two-thirds of the chairs in the front row right in front of my table were occupied by men and boys. As one after another prayed, I heard as I was bowed in prayer somebody saying, "Amen—Amen—Amen." I opened my eyes and I saw two boys—two brothers—recently converted, perfectly unconscious of all their surroundings, but lost in prayer, and saying "Amen" to the petitions of men of years. I told those boys at the close of the service that their response to the prayers of God's people brought an indescribable blessing to my own soul.

"Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord God; I will make this proverb to cease which says that young people cannot be interested in Jesus Christ. I will make them interested in Me. I will so fill their hearts with the Holy Spirit that they will say—

"My heart refuseth joys like these,
Since I have known the Lord."

What shall we do? Just go on praying for a revival. I am sure it will come. If God would honour us by sending it to this place—in some measure the blessing is here, but it is only the beginning of blessing—if God would honour us by sending it to this place, I think we would praise Him for ever. I wish you had all been here on Thursday night. There was a man with us who was converted about four months ago. His little boy was called suddenly home, and he was converted at that time. He was baptized here; and the next week he went up to a little town several miles north of Toronto. I felt concerned about him, as he was only a babe in Christ; but he started immediately to work for the Lord. He gathered a few people in his own house for prayer, and he soon became the centre of a prayer-circle. Last Thursday night he came to our meeting and told us of the revival that had broken out in one of the churches—not a Baptist church, there is no Baptist church in the town—and seventy had been converted. He told of one man who would not go near the church, and he said, "The Lord gave me the assurance that he would make him come." And he did! He said, "I enjoy the prayer-meetings, but not half as much as I enjoy praying when I am alone with God." He had just been converted and baptized when he was called out of town: "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." And it may be that God will humble us in the dust, that He will not give us any credit at all; it may be that He will let us be His remembrancers; and that while we pray He will bless India and China and Africa and the Islands of the sea, and no one will know but God that we have had anything to do with it. Only let us believe He hears us. Let us trust Him; and keep on praying that God will vindicate His own Word and make the proverb to cease.

In the last book of the Bible we hear Him say, "Behold, I come quickly." Let us answer, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Then the proverb will cease. I am not at all

disturbed by publications which say that Christ is not coming again. I know He is coming! Woe be to those who have said He will not come, when He comes! But we are forewarned "that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Such sneers have become proverbial; but the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in a flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—and then He will make the proverb to cease.

Therefore, let us resolve that we will commit ourselves to the Lord; we will burn—as I said a couple of Sunday mornings ago—we will burn all our bridges behind us; we will depend upon God alone, and wait until He shall be gracious to us. And I am sure He will honour us thus far in permitting us to be used in some measure to bring glory to His great Name.

THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE STRONG

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." So speaks the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Romans. Strength, as applied to men, is always a relative term. Human strength must always be defined in the comparative, and never in the superlative, degree.

There are many kinds of strength. One may be strong physically, mentally, morally, financially, officially, or spiritually. But whatever measure of strength is given to the Christian, it imposes upon him the obligation to recognize it as a sacred trust. It is well to remember that we can always find someone weaker than ourselves—as we can always find someone stronger—and our obligation as Christians is not so much to lean upon those who are stronger, as to endeavour to help those who are weaker.

The particular infirmities to which the Apostle Paul alludes grow out of a spiritual immaturity. There are people who, spiritually, are still children. They are not instructed in the deep things of God. They are not able to make fine distinctions in the spiritual realm. They are not competent to bear heavy burdens, nor to withstand severe temptations. They are compassed about with the infirmities of their spiritual nonage. They are like little children who have scarcely strength enough to lift their feet clear of the ground, and are in danger of stumbling over the smallest unevenness in their path.

There will always be people with whom the strong will be tempted to be impatient. We may not be impatient with little children, for we see they are such. But, spiritually, there are many who appear to be strong, but who are very weak. It is easy to get out of patience with people who do not understand what we assume they ought to understand. Almost everybody is ready to lend a helping hand to the blind, or to give way to a man who is physically lame, to make allowance for people who are mentally subnormal. We should remember that, in the realm of spiritual realities, we shall often find blind or shortsighted people. There will be people whose moral qualities, like the legs of the lame, are not equal; and therefore we may find them halting in paths of righteousness.

There are others who have not, as yet, had their senses exercised to discern good and evil. In respect to a knowledge of spiritual matters, they are subnormal; they are weak, and have many infirmities. It is the duty of such as may be stronger, to relate themselves serviceably to all who are weaker, to be patient when foolish questions are asked. We do well to remember that it is written, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." That is to say, our Lord is such a patient Instructor that when questions are asked of Him, even Infinite Wisdom does not upbraid the spiritually ignorant, but graciously bestows the wisdom sought. So we should try to be patient with spiritual babes—not only those who are young in years, boys and girls, young men and women, but all who are young in grace, whatever be the number of their years.

The same is true, of course, of those who are strong in temporal matters, people who are strong financially. Every Christian man should recognize in every gift which God bestows upon him a sacred trust to be administered in the interests of others. It is very easy for the strong to develop a habit of pleasing themselves. There are people who are somewhat mature in their Christian experience. They have had years of opportunity to study the Bible, and they have employed those years with diligence, so that they are well instructed in things pertaining to the kingdom of God. But it is quite possible for one to glory in his spiritual wealth as the rich man of the parable gloried in his material riches when he is represented as saying to his soul, "Thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

We have known some people who were proud of their spiritual wealth, but they employed it only to take their ease; to eat, drink, and be merry. There are a great many so-called Bible conferences which have a tendency to develop that spirit and attitude of mind, leading people to felicitate themselves on their spiritual opulence, to the utter neglect of the poor and hungry multitudes about them. It should be the rule of the Christian life that we are not to please ourselves, even as Christ pleased not Himself. On the contrary, we ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. It is an obligation resting upon every believer to find others in need of such help as he is competent to give.

In the exercise of this obligation, however, it will often be found that the weak are by no means grateful for the ministry of the strong. It is sometimes said, rather cynically, that the best way to get rid of an objectionable person is to lend him ten dollars. Having done that, you may be pretty sure he will avoid your presence. It is often true that when the strong exercise themselves to help the weak, they receive for their pains nothing but ingratitude, and are likely indeed to be forsaken until such time as the weak brother finds himself again in difficulty.

But that has always been true. Abraham was stronger than Lot, and wherever Abraham went, "Lot went with him"—until such time as it seemed to Lot, whose vision was defective, that he could advantage himself by separating from Abraham. He apparently soon forgot all that Abraham had done for him. And yet in the great emergency of life, it was Abraham the strong who once again appeared to bear the infirmities of his weaker brother. Joseph was strong in the sense that he

was God's chosen. He was to become the saviour of his brethren in the time of famine. It was in the providence of God that he should become a fruitful bough whose branches should run over the wall. But alas! the archers shot at him, and his brethren were far from appreciating his good intentions.

Moses was a strong man, and was appointed of God to lead God's people out of Egypt. But if he had been Israel's worst enemy, they could scarcely have treated him more unkindly. The same was true of David. He stepped into the breach when all Israel were trembling in the face of the enemy. But the victory which he accomplished over the Philistines incurred Saul's jealousy, and brought him endless trouble. The same was true of his exploits in later years. He was the man to whom all Israel looked as their deliverer, and yet the people "spake of stoning him".

The same was true of all the prophets, and of course the outstanding example of this principle, in all the ages, was that of our Lord Himself Who prophetically declared, "For my love they are my adversaries." He "went about doing good". He took no man's silver or gold; received nothing from man, but gave everything to him. Yet in the hour of trial He stood alone, and was crucified for the good He had done. Hence we are admonished to "consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

It were better to be deceived ninety-nine times than unjustly to suspect one honest soul; far better to waste our benevolence upon the unworthy, than cynically, because of the ingratitude of those whom we have tried to help, to permit one weak brother to perish "for whom Christ died". Those who spend themselves bearing the infirmities of the weak, will never be out of employment, but they will receive very small remuneration. Here and there they will meet with grateful hearts. At least one of the ten lepers will return to give God thanks—and if one in ten of the people whom we try to help should be moved with gratitude to say, "Thank you", we should not complain.

We ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. There is but one way by which we may be enabled to persevere in such a ministry, and that is to find our compensation in whatever we may be permitted to do. Whether people recognize and acknowledge that we have tried to be helpful or not, does not matter. So long as our own consciences approve, and we are sure that we have sincerely endeavoured to do the will of God, we need not worry though the one we have helped receives our bounty without so much as a word of gratitude. Our duty as Christians is to live for by-and-by, to go about doing good as our Master did, no matter how often we may be betrayed by those who call themselves our friends, or opposed by those who once professed to fight by our side. We must endeavour to keep our spirits sweet, and simply continue to carry on.

This principle applies, not only to individuals, but to churches. A church may become relatively strong. That is to say, on the human side, it may become self-sufficient in the sense that it has sufficient numbers and material resources to be independent of outside aid. The Pastor of such a church may easily allow himself to become like the rich man of the parable—to allude to the same scripture once again—and may indeed resolve, "I will pull down my barns, and build greater." He may build every-

thing about himself, and glory in having a strong church with no entangling alliances. But he must not forget there are weaker churches, churches that are numerically small, unable to maintain a testimony among themselves, and having but very little to contribute for the spread of the gospel in the regions beyond. It is only as those who are strong relate themselves helpfully to those who are weak, that all the fragments that remain can be gathered up, and a large and united effort made for the propagation of the gospel at home and abroad.

Sometimes the stronger church grows weary of such a ministry. It is constantly harassed by little matters which, in its larger experience, it has long since outgrown; and it may be disposed impatiently to say, "I will have nothing more to do with Associations or Conventions. We will stay at home and mind our own affairs." That, of course, is quite possible—but it is not the Christian thing to do. Young churches, like young people, have their moods. Inexperienced pastors, like inexperienced men in other realms of life, become impulsive and impatient; and even men of maturity and experience, under stress of unfavorable circumstances, may display characteristics that are scarcely worthy of the full-grown. In such circumstances, the strong should ever try to bear the infirmities of the weak, and be patient, and wait for other moods, and a calmer spirit, and a saner judgment.

DR. NORRIS IN JARVIS STREET

Jarvis Street Church enjoyed the ministry of Dr. Norris for three services. Friday evening, July 2nd, the church was filled, and in an inspiring and instructive address, Dr. Norris argued that the only solution for the world's ills is the gospel of grace for the individual sinner.

The auditorium was again filled morning and evening on Sunday, when Dr. Norris spoke in the morning on the importance and possibilities of personal work, and in the evening on the prospect of revival. Both services were greatly enjoyed, and were fraught with great spiritual power. The Pastor presided at all services, and at the Monthly Communion following the evening service.

The Jarvis Street congregation were delighted to have the opportunity of greeting Mrs. Norris also at the close of the Communion Service, Sunday evening. Dr. and Mrs. Norris left by the Queen Mary, from New York, on Wednesday, for a three or four months' stay in Europe and Palestine.

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THE NEXT THREE SUNDAYS

For the remaining Sundays of July, the Jarvis Street pulpit will be supplied by Rev. Harold C. Slade, of Timmins; Ontario, whose ministry was so richly enjoyed the last three Sundays of June.

NEWS OF UNION CHURCHES

The Sunderland District Association of Regular Baptists assembled in conference on Wednesday, June 16th, in the beautifully-situated Maple Hill Baptist Church. A time of rich blessing and fellowship was enjoyed by all who attended. Both afternoon and evening sessions were largely attended. The speaker of the afternoon session was the Rev. J. Byers, Orillia, who brought a very forceful message on the Second Coming. Rev. W. W. Fleischer of Fenelon Falls gave us a very inspiring message at the evening session on the Great Commission.

A very bountiful supper was served on the lawn of Mr. Knight's home by the ladies of the church, and was greatly enjoyed by all who sat down.

Pastor J. Armstrong of Maple Hill was appointed Moderator for the coming year.

F. G. RATCLIFF,
Secretary.

BETHEL REGULAR BAPTIST CHURCH, ORILLIA, ONT.—It is a joy to us as a church to accede to the request for news of the progress of our work in Orillia. We say at the outset that God has been pleased singularly to bless our efforts this year, and in a manner beyond any yet experienced in the work of Bethel Church. This we say to the praise of His glory, that many have been blessed spiritually.

During the past four months, some fifty or more have professed salvation and the Pastor has had the privilege of baptizing thirty. Others are waiting to obey the Lord in baptism. Backsliders have been brought into more intimate and joyful communion with the Saviour, and not the least of our blessings has been the marked increase in every department of our financial interests. We praise God Who alone has wrought these things in our midst, and we continue to look to Him in prayer believingly and humbly for days to come.

The President, Rev. Alexander Thomson, addressed our bi-monthly missionary meeting on Wednesday, June 30th. He delivered an inspiring and interesting lecture on Home Missions, and was warmly received by the people. An offering was taken for the purpose of supporting the home base.—John Byers.

ST. ANDRE AVELLIN, QUEBEC—Recently the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec co-operated with the Eastern churches in the purchase of a tent to be used in the spread of the Gospel by means of a tent campaign. We are pleased to receive the following encouraging report from Pastor H. G. Hindry:

"We report a splendid gathering on July 1st at Thomas' Gore, both afternoon and evening, in spite of the threatening weather. The rain showers could not prevent our voices rising in praise and thanksgiving to our God Who had thus blessed us with such a fine tent.

"Splendid gospel songs were rendered by a trio from Ottawa. Brother Roy Hisey gave a brief history of the obtaining of the tent, and the tent was solemnly dedicated to the service of Christ and His glory as he led us in prayer.

"Bright singing and testimony characterized the afternoon session, and Pastors C. Hardie of Dalesville, J. Walker of Cumberland and H. Hindry of St. Amedee gave short messages.

"In the evening Mr. S. Goldsworthy led the song service, and tested our knowledge of scripture, and memory, by calling for verses dealing with the new birth. Brother Lorne Hisey brought a gospel message, tenderly warning people of the terrible result of rejecting Christ and lovingly urging them to accept of Him as their Saviour.

"Happy fellowship was enjoyed as we ate our basket lunch on the lawn of Mrs. Titley's home, when the ladies served tea.

"It was a good day in the tent of the Lord, and we earnestly ask for the prayers of God's people as campaigns are carried on at Thomas' Gore, Cumberland and other places."

Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 1 3rd Quarter Lesson 29 July 18, 1937

DR. OLIVE L. CLARK

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

Lesson Text: Luke 3.

Golden Text: "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased."—Luke 3:22b.

I. The Proclamation of Christ by John the Baptist—verses 1-20.

Read also Matt. 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8; John 1:6-8, 15-36.

In verses 1 and 2 we have the historical setting of our Lord's public ministry, connecting this event with the civil and religious history of Palestine. The Roman Emperor is named, also the subordinate rulers over districts in Palestine, and the high priests.

As John waited in the desert, the word of the Lord came to him, as it had come to other prophets (1 Kings 18:1; 21:17, 28; Jer. 1:4; Hosea 1:1), bidding him go forth into the region about Jordan and preach the message given him. That message might be summed up in two words: "Repent; believe." He urged men to turn from their sins (Matt. 3:2), and to believe in Christ (John 3:36).

His mission in relation to Christ might be described by means of three illustrations which are suggested: he was a voice, a king's forerunner and a king's herald. Now a voice is merely the sound made when thoughts, feelings and judgments are communicated by one person to another. John was the human instrument chosen to convey God's thoughts, feelings and decisions concerning sin and its remedy (Isa. 40:3).

In Roman times, when the Emperor travelled, or when an army was to be sent to some distant part of the Empire, road engineers with crews of men were sent in advance to clear the way. They would cut a way through the mountains and fill in the valleys, to make the road as level as possible, straighten the curves, and remove all obstacles which might hinder the progress of the King or army. John was commissioned to prepare the way of the Lord, furthering His triumphant march, that His glory and salvation might be revealed to all men (Isa. 40:4, 5; 49:6; 52:10; Luke 2:30, 31).

It was the duty of the king's herald to go before the king, blowing his trumpet, thus announcing the king's approach. As the recent events in Great Britain have been broadcast by radio, we have become familiar with the flourish of trumpets playing the royal salute, that triumphant melody which proclaims to all that the king is present. So did John the Baptist proclaim the presence of the King of Glory (Matt. 3:2).

The scathing language used by John the Baptist against the self-righteous Pharisees shows how God regards those who would endeavour to cover up their sins with a cloak of religion (Lu. 11:39). These men came seeking baptism, a symbol of death to the old life and resurrection to the new life, without exhibiting any desire to turn from their sin. They would depend for their safety upon this outward rite, as they depended also upon their birth as descendants of Abraham. Emphasize God's way of salvation through faith in Christ. These Pharisees were not producing *fruits* worthy of repentance since they had not the *root* of repentance in their hearts (verse 9).

"Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve,
By doing them no more."

To the people desiring to know what works they should do to show their repentance, he counselled deeds of love and unselfishness; to the publicans—honesty; to the soldiers—mercy, justice and contentment.

As the people were "in expectation": that is, "in suspense", they reasoned in their hearts as to whether John was the Messiah, and sent Levites and priests from Jerusalem to question him (John 1:19, 20). John called attention, not to himself, but to Christ, and urged even his own followers to turn from him and follow Christ (John 1:35-37; 3:30). The prophecy of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire was literally fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:3, 4, 17).

Since that day, every believer is baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ, and into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12, 13; Gal. 3:26-28). The water baptism of John unto repentance was introductory to the Spirit baptism unto sanctification.

Fire speaks of judgment (v. 17), as well as of purity; the same element burns the dross and purifies the gold.

II. The Baptism of Christ—verses 21, 22.

Read also Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; John 1:32-34.

What grace is expressed in those words "Jesus also"! He had no sin of His own to repent of, or confess, but He became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21), and He stood in the Jordan River, representing us; He took the place which belonged to us; He was numbered with the transgressors (Isa. 53:12).

He became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. He undertook to "fulfil all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15), to work out completely the law of God, which we were powerless to obey (Rom. 8:3, 4). He fulfilled all righteousness for us, not merely throughout His perfect earthly life, but especially in His death, burial and resurrection. His baptism pictured His death, burial and resurrection, by which salvation became possible for us.

Christ in His own Person instituted the ordinance of Christian baptism. John's baptism, intended for those who repented, was preparatory to Christian baptism, designed for all who believe (Acts 16:30-34; 19:4, 5; 18:8). As our Lord was to command all believers to be baptized (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 10:48), He first gave us the example, showing His grace in giving no command which He was not willing Himself to obey. He blazed the trail for us.

"To Jordan's stream the Spirit led
To mark the path that saints should tread;
With joy they trace the sacred way
To see the place where Jesus lay."

"He taught the solemn way;
He fixed the holy rite;
He bade His ransomed ones obey
And keep the path of light."

The attitude of prayer on the part of our Saviour at the very commencement of His public ministry gives us an example to emulate.

The three Persons of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are manifested at the baptism of Christ. The Holy Spirit resting in the form of a dove upon the Lord Jesus was a sign to John that He was truly the Messiah (John 1:33, 34), a fact to which God gave further testimony in the words of approval: "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." Similar words were heard on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:5), but there was no time during His earthly career when this statement was not true (John 8:29). God delights in the obedience of all His children (1 Sam. 15:22), and many of us can testify to the joy experienced when we followed Christ in baptism.

"Baptized by John in Jordan's wave,
Heaven owned the deed, approved the way,
The Saviour left His watery grave;
And blessed the place where Jesus lay."

"Come, all who love His precious name,
Come, tread His steps and learn of Him;
Happy beyond expression they,
Who find the place where Jesus lay."

III. The Genealogy of Christ—verses 23-38.

Christ was about thirty years of age when His public ministry began. This was the age at which the priests of Israel commenced their duties (Numbers 4:3).

The Gospel of Matthew, chapter I, gives the genealogy of Joseph, son of Jacob, of the royal line of David. In Luke, where Joseph is spoken of as "son of Heli", we are probably to understand this as "son-in-law of Heli". That would mean that this genealogy gives the line of descent of Mary, who also belonged to the house of David. The Holy Spirit, speaking through the Old Testament prophets had said that the Messiah should belong to the lineage of David (2 Sam. 7:12, 13; Psa. 132:11; Isa. 9:6, 7; Jer. 23:5, 6), and the purpose of these two lists is to show the fulfilment of God's word (Matt. 1:1). On His mother's side, Christ was a descendant of David according to the flesh, and also on Joseph's side according to Jewish law and custom which regards the one who protects and trains a child as the father, irrespective of natural parentage.